



Sweet Grass County
Conservation
District

EXHIBIT

14

DATE

Jan. 16, 2013

HB

6

Joint Appropriations Committee – Long Range Planning; House Bill – 6; Wednesday, January 16th

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mark Thompson; I am a rancher from Melville and also serve as Chairman of the Sweet Grass County Conservation District.

With me today are Chad Raisland, our project engineer and Dan Rostad, the District's watershed group coordinator.

This project will provide funding for the second phase of our Big Timber Creek Channel Stabilization Project that will complete this comprehensive solution to the damages of problematic stream migration and erosion on Big Timber Creek, located about 5 miles north of Big Timber.

The Sweet Grass Conservation District has taken the lead on this project and for the past four years has brought together a wide array of voices that developed this long term solution.

The first phase of this overall project provided a 450 foot buried revetment and other stream channel erosion efforts that will prove to protect this vulnerable stretch of Big Timber Creek.

Left unchecked, flood waters would most certainly have left its current channel and leave three vital irrigation ditch diversion abandoned and non-functional.

This issue also threatened the County's Swamp Creek roadway that would have required major reconstruction efforts and been extremely costly.

The results of our original efforts and first phase of this project were a collaborative success, not only because of the results of the rehabilitation work, but we also brought together a large group of participants including Montana DNRC; Fish, Wildlife & Parks; DEQ; Army Corps; and Sweet Grass County.

The first phase of this project included significant financial contributions from the affected water rights owners, the landowner where the project is located and a generous contribution from the Sweet Grass County Commission which covered nearly ten percent of the overall cost.

Your support of this project will allow us to finish the project and solidify the stabilization goals we have worked very hard to complete.

These goals include not only ensuring stable water flows to three irrigation diversions, but protecting homes and private property, a pristine wildlife and fisheries habitat, an agricultural lands and a vital county roadway that provides sole access to more than 75 residents.

The first phase of this project has been viewed by key DNRC administrative staff and it is with their recommendation that we are pursuing funding for this final phase of the project. We are pleased to offer this project to you for your funding consideration and greatly appreciate the support we have received from DNRC, DEQ and FWP staff.

Thank you for the opportunity to present our project.
We are available to answer your questions.

Mark Thompson, Chairman

Sweet Grass County Conservation District